

It Takes A Lot Of Work For A Great Event Potato Days Festival Office Has Moved To Front Street

Juggling all the tasks and details that go into planning an event like Potato Days takes a bushel of drive and dedication.

It takes a team of volunteers, who are overseen by an eight-member board of directors. In addition to their input and oversight, the festival itself is put on with the help of nearly 100 volunteers who give their time for no reward other than the act of keeping the festival going.

Potato Days Executive Director Theresa Olson has again organized this year's event with assistance from Diane Tobin.

In her 12th year as director, Olson said this year's event has shaped up well, and she's optimistic for another great two days of potato-related fun.

"We've had some good early entries," Olson said. "We're

expecting a good turnout. It looks like the food court will be overflowing with people and vendors."

There's no way to get an accurate count on attendance. Olson estimates the event has grown from 10,000 to 12,000 to about 20,000 to 22,000 people over the two days.

The event has drawn national and international attention, Olson said. "We have a board that tracks some of the states and countries that attendees come from. Some are just passing through to other places and events. It's just fun how this event draws people from so far away."

Potato Days has been referenced on "The Today Show," in the Boston Tribune and on the Food Network, to



Potato Days Executive Director Theresa Olson has organized the festival for the past four years from her home in Florida with help from Diane Tobin and the Board of Directors.

name a few. It's been named among TripAdvisor's Top 10 Wackiest Festivals contest two years in a row.

For those who may not be familiar with the event's origins, Potato Days started in the 1930s as a celebration after completion of harvest.

"There was a picking event for the men," Olson said. "A peeling event was added for the women."

The deepening Depression led to the event's demise. In 1991, Potato Days was revived and has been running ever since.

"We've added events and dropped some," Olson said. "Of course there are always favorites, like the street fair and car shows, that draw a lot of people. Potato Days just offers things you can't find anywhere else. It's also a great way for grandparents to show their grandchildren how things were done in bygone days."

The efforts of the board and the volunteers have paid off in the last few years. Even with the success, the road to putting on the festival each August is a year-long affair. While enjoying this year's Potato Days, take a moment to thank the countless volunteers and board members that have given their time and effort to make the event possible.

"Without our volunteers, there's no way we could pull off the festival," Olson added.

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By: Theresa Olson

We are now located at 124 Front Street, the former Kelly's Bridal location. We are excited to be a part of downtown Front Street and have a more visible presence with the community and during the festival.

Potato Days has had their office on the second floor of Wells Fargo for over 20 plus years. All the directors and board members have spent many hours working, meeting and organizing the festival through the years.

We've shared the second floor space with Karen Lauer with EDA and Bailey Thompson with Main Street for many years. We valued that relationship as they would help people who stopped up to the Potato Days office with answering questions and dropping off items, etc. We will certainly miss being across the hall from them both!



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